Met Office

NEWS

Heatwave breaks with thunderstorms

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Very hot conditions will continue across central, eastern and southeastern parts of the England until the end of the week, but the heat will trigger intense thunderstorms in some areas.

The heatwave of 2018 will reach a peak for the time being on Thursday and Friday with temperatures likely to break the UK July record, and possibly the all-time UK record somewhere in southeast England. Highs of 36 °C are expected on Thursday and 37 °C on Friday.

Steve Ramsdale, Chief Meteorologist at the Met Office, said: "The heatwave conditions are expected to peak across many places from the English Midlands eastwards on Thursday and Friday, with temperatures into the mid to high 30s Celsius. It's likely that we will see a new temperature record set for July and possible that we could break the all-time UK record of 38.5° C if conditions all come together.

"If you're looking for somewhere to escape the heat, western and northern areas will have pleasantly warm mid 20s Celsius, although across Northern Ireland and western Scotland this may be accompanied by occasionally cloudy skies."

Today (26 July) has seen the highest temperature recorded so far this year with 35.1 °C at Wisley, Surrey.

The highest temperature recorded in 2017 was 34.5° C at Heathrow on 21st June. Prior to this, the most recent heatwave was in July 2015 when temperatures peaked at 36.7 °C at Heathrow on 1 July, a temperature that is currently the July all-time maximum record. The all-time record in the UK is 38.5° C at Faversham on 10 August 2003.

The dry spell has been most prolonged in East Anglia and Southeast England. Most especially much of East Anglia and Cambridgeshire, extending through Essex into London and also around Bournemouth and Southampton. Parts of the Midlands have also been very dry. The last day of very widespread rainfall for East Anglia and the south-east was 29 May.

Hot weather often brings the risk of showers and thunderstorms and we are expecting of a scattering of these to break out from mid-late afternoon on Thursday, especially in in central and eastern England. It is Friday when the chance of intense thunderstorms is greatest across eastern parts of England before the fresher, conditions finally make their way east across the UK for the weekend.

Ramsdale added: "There is the chance of thunderstorms breaking out over some eastern parts of England and southeast Scotland later on Thursday, but it is Friday afternoon and evening when we expect to see intense thunderstorms affecting many central and eastern areas.

"These will be heaviest over eastern and northern England where there is a Met Office Weather Warning in force. Whilst many places will remain dry and hot, the thunderstorms on Friday could lead to torrential downpours in places with a much as 30 mm of rainfall in an hour and 60 mm in 3 hours. Large hail and strong, gusty winds are also likely and combined could lead to difficult driving conditions as a result of spray and sudden flooding."

Looking ahead to the weekend, temperatures will have dropped somewhat but it will still be pleasantly warm in sunny spells. We can expect to see more rain at times pushing northeastwards across much of the UK and stronger winds than we have seen for some time. With this windier weather, conditions around coasts, particularly in the southwest, may be rougher than we have seen so far this summer.

The hot and sunny weather is an opportunity for many to enjoy the outdoors, especially during the school holidays. Amanda Bond from Visit Suffolk said: "With Suffolk having seen some of the highest temperatures this week and with the sunshine set to continue, this gives visitors the perfect excuse to get outdoors and experience what the county has to offer.

“Suffolk is known for its natural beauty, 50 miles of glorious coastline and charming villages and historic towns. Now the schools are out for summer there are many ways to occupy the kids with our fun-filled family visitor attractions but sometimes, in a place this rich and beautiful, just being here is pleasure enough."

A Level 3 heat-health watch warning has been issued for a large part of England, in association with Public Health England. The Heat Health Watch Service is designed to help healthcare professionals manage through periods of extreme temperature.

Hot weather, especially when prolonged, with warm nights, can have effects on people's health and on certain infrastructure. To aid preparation and awareness before and during a prolonged hot spell, a heatwave plan has been created by Public Health England in association with the Met Office and other partners. It recommends a series of steps to reduce the risks to health from prolonged exposure to severe heat for:

- The NHS, local authorities, social care, and other public agencies
- Professionals working with people at risk
- Individuals, local communities and voluntary groups

Dr Thomas Waite, Consultant in Health Protection at Public Health England, said: “Temperatures are likely be high in parts of England this week, which may leave older people, young children and those with long-term conditions, including heart and lung diseases, struggling to adapt to the heat. So keep an eye on friends and family who may be at risk.

“To beat the heat, try to keep out the sun from 11am to 3pm, walk in the shade if you can, apply sunscreen and wear a hat if you have to go out in the heat. Also try to carry water with you when travelling.”

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